

Michigan Supreme Court with Justice Elizabeth T. Clement

Keywords

Administrative Function – All responsibilities of the Michigan Supreme Court not related to deciding cases. The Court oversees the lower state courts and sets rules for all court proceedings.

Attorney – A lawyer; a person allowed to practice law in a state and who is qualified to represent the legal interests of another person or group.

Conference – A weekly meeting of the Justices to discuss cases and administrative matters.

Court – Here, the Michigan Supreme Court; refers to the Justices as a group.

Court of Appeals – The appellate court between the trial courts and the Michigan Supreme Court.

Dissent – An opinion written by a Justice explaining why he or she disagrees with the decision reached by the majority considering the case.

Issue – A legal question about a case.

Law Clerks – Staff who work for a Judge or Justice to assist with legal research and writing.

Liaison – A Michigan Supreme Court Justice who communicates with court staff about a particular area or project and reports regularly to the other members of the Court.

Majority – At least four Justices of the Michigan Supreme Court; all decisions are by majority rules.

Memo – A formal written communication or report.

Opinions – Written decisions announcing a court's ruling in a case on appeal. The majority opinion explains the reasoning followed by the majority who heard the case and must be followed by the lower courts in future cases.

Oral Arguments – Court proceedings in which the attorneys answer questions from the Judges/Justices about their case.

Parties – The two sides in a case.

Plaintiff – The side bringing a case to a trial court; the other side is the “defense.”

Rules – Courts must follow many different sets of rules in order to assure fair proceedings.

Trial Courts – The lower courts that decide the facts, where most cases start and stop.

For more definitions, see the Michigan Judicial Institute's [Handbook of Legal Terms](#).